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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/FO DAS GASTRIGHT, SCA/A,
NATO/ISAF/AUS/NZ
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
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SENSITIVE, SIPDIS

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TAGS: MCAP MOPS PREL PGOV PTER PHUM AF
SUBJECT: PRT JALALABAD - CAMPAIGN AGAINST POPPIES

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: During a December 2 meeting with PRT Commander, PRT Officer, and Maj. Richard Schwaiger, Nangahar Governor Gul Agha Sherzai pledged his continued commitment to make Nangarhar free of poppies and terrorism, but he lamented that some Nangahar officials still encourage poppy cultivation. He mentioned his replacement of the subgovernor of Spin Ghar - an area known to be a regional hub for trafficking and drug labs - and asked that Coalition Forces continue their operations against drug labs and drug bazaars. Later that day, PRT officials accompanied Governor Sherzai to a shura with 200 tribal elders from the Nangahr districts bordering Pakistan, during which Sherzai publicly reiterated that any drug labs in the province would be destroyed.
END SUMMARY.

Campaign Against Poppies

¶2. (SBU) The Governor began with a report on the progress of his campaign against growing poppy since he returned from a trip to Germany in late October. He pledged his continued commitment to make Nangarhar free of poppies and terrorism, and expressed his disappointment that some members of the Parliament from Nangahar continue to encourage people to grow poppy. He commented that he recently appointed Mohammed Palawan, a popular former Mujahadeen Commander, as subgovernor of Spin Ghar. (Comment: Like Sherzai himself, all subgovernors in the province are former Mujahadeen. The southern half of the Achin district - the mountainous region on the border with Pakistan - is known as Spin Ghar. Locally it is considered to be a separate district with officials appointed by the province. It is, however, not recognized by the national government as separate. The northern area of Achin is known to be peaceful with limited poppy cultivation, while the Spin Ghar area is known as a regional hub for trafficking, drug labs, and bazaars. End Comment.)

¶3. (SBU) The Governor repeated the old refrain that the USAID's Alternative Livelihood Program and other provincial development initiatives supported by international organizations are giving money and projects to the provinces that grow poppies and support insurgents, rather than to the provinces that support the government's efforts. He said that lots of promises were made last year to farmers if they didn't grow poppies, but they have not been fulfilled. He said that he plans to write a letter to General Eikenberry and the Ambassador complaining that they have not followed through on providing funding.

(Comment: This oft repeated complaint that "others" are getting more support seems to be almost universal, as it comes from every official, district, and province. USAID has programmed over \$80 million in development assistance in Nangarhar since 2002 - with Nangarhar being one of the largest provincial recipients of USAID support in the country. Nangarhar and Helmand Provinces receive the highest proportion of USAID's Alternative Livelihoods Program support in the country. It is ironic that Governor Sherzai made such a comment, as Provincial Council Chairman Fazljadi Muslimyar and others have accused the governor of making similar unfulfilled promises in the last year. The Director of Counter Narcotics for the ANP has said that officials from Kabul (whom he would not name) came to Nangarhar and made those promises last year. While there may be misunderstanding and exaggeration about what was or was not promised by both the GOA and international organizations, the GOA nonetheless shares some responsibility for creating unrealistic expectations. End Comment.)

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¶4. (U) The PRT Commander pointed out that Nangarhar Province has received more support than other provinces in the country in many forms, and that people who complain about not getting any support should remember that they are driving on roads recently built by the PRT and USAID. (Comment - To the Governor's credit, in the shura with Shinwari elders following this meeting, he repeated the Commander's comments, telling the elders that Nangarhar has received more projects than other provinces because of their good efforts in eliminating poppies last year. End Comment.)

¶5. (U) The Governor also discussed recent security related incidents, and said that he believes that certain Afghan government officials are involved. He criticized the recent crackdown on corruption in Jalalabad by the new Afghan Attorney General, saying that he cannot make this area free of corruption if "big guys" are still corrupt. He then insisted that the PRT officials accompany him to the Shura with Shinwari tribal elders.

Shura with Shinwari Elders

¶6. (U) At a separate event held the same day, approximately 200 Shinwari tribal elders (from the southeastern districts bordering Pakistan) were at the Shura where the Governor gave his customary and enthusiastic speech about supporting the government and not growing poppies. He said that Pakistan is interfering in Afghan affairs by suggesting that NATO is failing and that Karzai should leave. He noted that this is actually a time of "golden opportunity" with the coalition forces here, along with the improving ANA and ANP. He said that he has reported to the coalition forces that the problems are all from outsiders, and not from the Afghan tribes.

¶7. (U) The governor emphasized that neither he nor the government will tolerate drug labs, and said he was warning people to destroy them. Provincial Council Chairman Muslimyar spoke next, and repeated the warning about the labs, saying that the central government will destroy the labs if the people in the province do not.